

about 1685

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A
LETTER
TO A
Friend, &c.

S I R,

HAVING by your favour had a sight of the late *Letter in Answer to the Arguing part of the D. of P's. first Letter to Mr. G.* I now return you it with my thanks, and some *Reflections* on so much of it, as attempts to demonstrate the *Infallibility* of the *Romish* Faith, and denies the *certainty* of *ours*. For whatever becomes of the *Conference*, which gave occasion to this *Letter*, the Contents of it thus far are of as much Concernment to *You* and *Me*, and indeed to all *Protestants*, as to that *worthy Person* to whom he writes it. The man is, you see, a great pretender to *Logick*, but you find him making much more use of his *Rhetorick*; and indeed it is to *this*, if to

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any thing, that he is beholding for so much as a *pretence* to the other; and if we feel no harm from *this*, we need not fear that the *other* can hurt us. You may be sure he wants no Wit, whom Mr. G. intrusts to *hold his Cards*, and *play his Game* too, with so well known a *Gamester*. Pardon me for using his own Language in a matter so serious, I say not, as his *Letter*, but as the *Subject* of it. His *Stile* is pleasant and taking enough, his way of *Arguing* meerly popular, and his *Art* accommodate to the design he is upon, of deluding the less thinking. Lastly, his *Confidence* is such, as we ought to expect in men that talk of nothing lower than *Self-evidence*, *absolute Certainty*, and *Infallibility*.

I wish with all my heart, that his value for Souls, *so precious to God*, be really as great, as he would have us think *theirs* is little, *who* (as he deridingly speaks) *set up for Ministers of the Gospel*. If he find any of them so regardless of their Duty, as he saith they are; let him freely, for me, spend all his *Rhetorick* in *Exclamations* against them, as he has begun to do, *Page 5*. But when he talks of *every Bodies speaking for himself one day*, and *bringing in his own account*; and asks, *if the Happiness or Misery of their Souls will not depend on that account?* And then expostulates with our *Ministers* in this manner, *Can you suffer them to run that terrible Hazard, without making them able to justify their accounts themselves, and furnishing them with Assurance that they can, and with no more to say, but that they hoped Dr. St. would make his party good with Mr. G. Ibid.* I am apt to think him some *Convert*,
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who knows not what to say, either for the *Church* he hath chosen, or against that he hath forsaken. He has heard, it may be, something to this purpose said against the *Priests* of that *Church*, whereof he now is; and not knowing what else to say, nor yet how to be silent, he saith the same against the *Ministers* of ours. Because our *Ministers* know that *every one of us must give account of himself to God*, therefore they not only give us leave, but earnestly *exhort* us to read and study the *Gospel* of *Christ*, whereby we must be judged; which is a Liberty very rarely granted in the *Church* of *Rome*. And because they know also our Happiness or Misery depends on this account we shall be able to give of our selves, therefore they will not have us depend upon their *Word* only, who are not able to acquit us in the day of Judgment, as the *Romanists* must do upon the word of their *Priests*, or upon nothing at all that I know of; but in preaching, they explain the *Scripture* to us, are importunate with us to search it; they *Catechize* us, exhort us to confer often with them, commend good Books of Instruction to us, use all ways they can to make us grow in Grace and Knowledg, and to enable us to give our account with joyfulness. But how comes this man, if he be a *Roman Catholick*, to talk of *furnishing them with assurance that they can*? If they may be assured that they can give up a good account, may they not be assured that they have the *Grace of God*, and of their *Justification* and *Salvation*? And if so, then what's become of that *Decree* of the *Council of Trent* -- *We must not affirm, that they who are truly justified, ought*

to conclude with themselves without any doubting at all, that they are justified; seeing no man can know by a certainty of Faith, under which there can be no falshood, that he hath obtain'd the Grace of God? If no man ought or can be assured that he hath the Grace of God, how are our Ministers bound to furnish us with Assurance that we can justify our Accounts our selves? Can a man justify his accounts, that is not sure he hath the Grace of God? Possibly his meaning may be no more, but that our Ministers give us not sufficient Assurance of the Truth of our Faith; and for want of that, we cannot justify our accounts. But if this be his meaning, it is very untowardly expressed, and after all, it will be a little hard to conceive, how the bare Assurance of the Truth of what is taught, should enable a man to justify his account, without an Assurance of Grace too, which the Council denies that any man can have.

He tells us next, That Truth is Truth, because 'tis built on intrinsecal grounds, and not on private mens Abilities, or their saying this or that. And hence infers, that Till those grounds be produced, it cannot be with reason held Truth. Ibid. He might as well have said more plainly, What any thing is, that it is, whatever be the Reasons why it is so, or whoever saith it is, or it is not: Yet can no man with Reason believe it, till he have a Reason to believe it. All this is true, and I think every body knew it before he told us it; nor is it the truer, because he hath said it, and therefore we have no more Reason to believe it, than we had before. But seeing Truth is Truth, whatever
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private men say ; we think it can depend no more upon the saying of a *Romish Priest*, than of an *English Minister* ; and therefore we think also , that the *Vulgar Papist*, at best, hath less certainty of the Truth they hold , than the *Vulgar Protestant* of the Truth we hold , whilst , besides the word of the *Priest* , the former hath no grounds at all to build his Faith upon ; but the later hath , besides the word of the *Minister*, the Word of God in the *Scripture* , which he may consult when he will. Moreover, if we cannot with *Reason* hold a Truth, till the *intrinsic grounds* of it be produced , then two things more must be true, which I fear this *Roman Catholick* will not grant us. *First* , That we cannot with *Reason* hold any thing for a Truth, namely, because the *Church of Rome* hath determined it ; for her *determination* is no *intrinsic ground* of the Truth , but onely an *outward testimony* or *declaration* of it ; and then what's become either of her *Infallibility* , or of her *Authority* to command our Faith ? *Secondly* , That the Common People must be allow'd their *Judgment of Discretion* ; for how without the free use of that, they shall discern the *Intrinsic grounds* of Truth when produced, and so with *Reason* hold it, I fear our *Author* cannot easily demonstrate : which yet if he cannot do , he must by his own Principles be forced to grant , That the *Church of Rome* hath no more *Infallibility* or *Authority* than the *Church of England* hath ; she is to be believed onely when she produceth the *Intrinsic ground* of Truth, and not otherwise, unless we must believe her without *Reason* ; and so far is the *Church of England* to be believed ; or any Church whatsoever. And so this *Author* hath (unawares I suppose) set us
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all on even ground, and I hope we may be able to maintain our ground against all that he saith hereafter for himself, or against us, to gain the advantage of us again.

First, He falls upon the *Certainty of the Protestant Faith*; which he hopes very easily to overthrow; and it will be as easily done, if it stand upon no surer ground than he would have it. Suppose (saith he) *Mr. G. could not prove Protestants are not certain, are they therefore certain?* pag. 4. This he first imagines, that all the *certainty of our Faith* is This, that *Papists cannot prove it to be uncertain*, and then 'tis pretty to see what sport he makes with his own imagination. But let him play on, it seems time for us to be in earnest and more serious, when the *certainty of our Faith* is struck at. It is too weighty a matter to be play'd away at a *game of Cards*; which is all he is *commission'd* to. Yet will he make the World believe, that we have thrown it away already; nay, he will needs make us believe it too. *You know well enough* (saith he) *that to prove Protestants have no Absolute certainty of their Faith, is no hard task for a weak man.* I say nothing yet of the word [*Absolute*] but ask, how know we this? Why, *we know any man may find it confessed to his hand by Protestants*, pag. 6. Who I pray are these *Protestants*? *Dr. Tillotson*, in his *Rule of Faith*, pag. 117, 118. I have so great a reverence for that very *Excellent man*, that I am not unwilling, though he be but *one Protestant*, that he should pass for *many*, and too many for all the *Traditionary Catholicks* to answer his *Rule of Faith*; but his *Confession*, that *Protestants have no certainty of their Faith*,

Faith, I must desire some good *Catholick* to shew me in those two Pages, or in any other part of his Book, when he can answer it, for till then I despair of finding it. We do not yet therefore see this *Confession*, nor he neither, if he may be believed against himself (some People have need of good *Memories* to save their *Credit*) for pag. 23. he tells us, *We seem to grant we are thus Absolutely certain, or Infallible by Virtue of Tradition.* How? *Confess* we have no certainty, and yet *seem to grant* we are *Infallible*; and that too by *Virtue of Tradition*? This is to make us right *Traditionary Papists*, indeed, whether we will or no, such as *Rushworth*, *Dr. Holden*, *Mr. Cressy*, and *Mr. White*; all contending for the *Infallibility of Tradition*, and yet *confessing* that what the greatest part of Mankind must be satisfied with, is *Probability* and *Conjecture*; as he may find in the 120th, and following Pages of *Dr. Tillotson's Rule of Faith*; where if he find them wrong'd, he hath the liberty to vindicate them if he can. Only I will here give him and his friends a seasonable warning, That if any *Protestant* shall, being now minded of it by him, begin to plead *Infallibility* by virtue of *Tradition*; it will behove them in time, after their many shiftings from Post to Post, to seek them out yet a new one; for when both Parties pretend a like to *Infallibility* and *Tradition*, neither of these can be any longer a fit *Medium* whereby to prove which is in the right.

It is agreed (as he saith well) *on all hands, Men are saved by believing and practising what Christ taught, not barely by believing Scripture is Scripture,* Page 7. And 'tis as true which he tells us, Page 8.

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Where Churches differ in Faith, infallible Faith in one cannot stand with certain Faith in the other. Whence he may do well to take notice, that when our certainty is once proved, no more is needful to confute their *Infallibility*. Now the Question is, (saith he) *Whether Protestants are absolutely certain, that they hold now the same Tenets in Faith, and all that our Saviour taught his Apostles?* Page 6. Which Question in that Challenge of his, Page 22. is thus explained. *Make manifest, that Protestants have absolute certainty, not only of the Scripture, which they call their Rule; but of the Faith, which they pretend to have from that Rule, or else suffer another thing to be manifest, viz. That you cannot do it, and thither I am sure it will come.* The Proof, he often tells us, is our part; and though he be so confident, that we cannot make it good; yet are we not afraid to undertake it, even all that he here calls upon us to prove, leaving out the word [*Absolutely*] till he tell us what is meant by it, as he will do anon. The *certainty* that we have of the Holy Scripture, which we acknowledg to be our *Rule of Faith*, we manifest after the same manner, as they do theirs, except only, that we ground it not on the *Infallibility* of their Church; and yet, if that will do us any good, we have it too confirming our *certainty*. But so much *certainty* he yields us; only he asks, *Did our Saviour teach, and do Protestants believe no more, than that the Book so call'd, is Scripture?* Page 6. Yes, tho I do not find that our Saviour ever taught that the Book so called is *Scripture*, one great part whereof was not written when he taught; yet do we be-

believe that it is *Scripture*, and *Divine Scripture*, the *Word of God*, containing in it all things necessary to Salvation, and that all things therein contain'd are true. Now this being granted us, that our *Scripture is God's Word*, we think that we do sufficiently prove the *certainty* of every *Article* of our *Faith* when we shew it to be solidly grounded on that *Word*; and this being shewn, our *Faith* is either *certain*, or they who deny it to be so, must affirm the *Word of God*, on which it is wholly grounded, to be no good *ground* of *Certainty*. Neither indeed can these men deny the *certainty* of our *Faith*, without denying *that* of their *own* too, so far as it is the same with ours; as indeed it is in all our *necessary Articles*, *ours* being no other but those in the *Creeds*, which are as well *theirs*, as *ours*.

Thus far then we have often proved the *certainty* of our *Faith*, and if he require it, will be ready to do it again. But this he knows well enough, and therefore would set us a harder task; but it is by all *Laws of Disputation* in our choice whether we will accept of it or no. Two things more he will have us prove. *First*, That we are *Absolutely certain* of all this: And *Secondly*, Not only this, but of *all that more* which our *Saviour* taught his *Apostles*. But that we are not obliged to prove either of these things, we are at least as sure, as he is that we cannot; and that I will confess to him is sure enough, taking his words in his own sense.

For *first*, he tells us, Pag. 23. *The profession of Absolute certainty makes a fair approach towards the Doctrine of Infallibility, or rather 'tis the self same with it.* And again, in the same Page he makes *Absolutely certain*, and *Infallible*, all one thing. When therefore he can meet with *Protestants* that *Pro- fess* themselves *absolutely certain* in his sense, that is, *Infallible*; 'tis fit he should call upon them, as we do on *Roman Catholicks*, to prove all is their due, which they as absurdly as presumptuously arrogate to themselves. But whilst he has to do with *Protestants* of the *Church of England*, who are of a modester disposition, let him not put them to the Blush for him, by telling them 'tis their duty to prove themselves to be as much wiser than they know themselves to be, as the *Church of Rome* thinks her self wiser than all other Churches.

And truly the next part of his demand is as unreasonable as this, to bid us prove that we are *absolutely certain* of *All* that *Christ* taught his *Apo- stles*. We are *certain*, as was said, of that which *Christ* and his *Apostles* have taught us in the *Holy Scripture*, writ on purpose to inform us of what they taught; and this we have reason to think *enough*, and *all* that we are bound to be *certain* of; because, we cannot imagine, if they writ not *all* that we are bound to know and believe, why they were at the pains to write so much; for if it be as these men tell us, that to believe but a *part* is as damnable as to believe *nothing*, they had as good have writ *nothing* as not the *whole* that we must believe. A few lines more might have instructed us in that *all* more which ('tis said) we should *certainly* believe, or a few

few words might have directed us to the *Infallible Church* to learn it. Were those good men so scanted of *time*, or sparing of *pains*, that they could not afford us this *all more*; especially whilst they spend so much of *both* in writing largely, things supposed by all not *Absolutely* necessary? And did the *Primitive Church* also grudge her Children the full knowledge of this *all* that *Christ* and his *Apostles* taught as the necessary *Faith* of *Christians*? We do not find in any of the ancient *Creeds* one branch of this *all more*, which the *Trent Council* so lately taught and commanded by vertue of *Tradition*. To say no more, we have *certainty* of *all* that is taught us in *Scripture*, and we know of no *more* that *Christ* and his *Apostles* taught us. The *Papists* say there is *more*, and we are bound to believe it; cannot now this *Gentleman* see by his own *Rules* of *Disputation*, that he and his Brethren ought to bear their *own burden*, the *proof* of *all* this *more*, that he would have us say we are *certain* of?

You see I hope by this time, that we decline no *proof* that is incumbent upon us. We prove the *Scripture* to be the *Word of God*; we prove every *Article* of our *Faith* by the *Scripture*; and thus we prove we have *sufficient certainty* of our whole *Faith*. Our *Rule* being certain, the *Faith* which agrees with it is certain too. If there be any thing *more*, that it is supposed *Christ* taught, and *Christians* must believe, he that *affirms* it, is obliged to *prove* it, or no longer to quarrel with those who know nothing of it.

Well, I perceive this *Author* has a mind to shew what he can do to *prove* we have no *certainty* of our *Faith*, in kindness, to us I suppose; that he may ease

us of the *impossible* task, as he accunts it, of proving that we have. And he has done it *unanswerably*, if we will believe him. *I declare openly* (saith he) *that you cannot answer this Discourse.* However we will try, and we have some reason for it, seeing he tells us *it nearly toucheth our Copyhold*, which he may well believe we have no mind to part with. We have it thus, Pag. 30, 31.

I. *God hath left us some Way to know surely what Christ and his Apostles taught.* This is a certain truth; what is then the *inference* from it?

II. *Therefore this Way must be such, that they who take it, shall arrive by it at the end it was intended for, that is, to know surely what Christ and his Apostles taught.* Alas! what dallying is here! Who is the wiser for this *inference*? Or who knows one jot the more by it, than he did by the *Antecedent*? If God hath left us a *Way to know*, then by that *Way* we may know. If such be his *Inferences* that he here engageth to make good, he needs not fear to make good his engagement, tho' his *Inference* be good for nothing. But his next may be better. Let us hear it.

III. *Scripture's Letter interpretable by Private Judgments, is not that Way.* Who doth the man here dispute against? Our Doctrine is, that *The Scripture only is the Rule of Faith*, or, *The Scripture contains all things necessary to Salvation.* I suppose it is against us that he would be thought to dispute in this *unanswerable Discourse*; and why doth he not in terms contradict our Doctrine, saying, *The Scripture only is not the*

the Rule of Faith, or the Scripture contains not all things necessary to Salvation? If, because he had in his *Proposition* used *Way* for *Rule* (which is very indifferent to us) he ought in his *Assumption* also to use the same word; yet, why faith he not *Scripture only*, but *Scripture's Letter*? And why more yet, *Scripture's Letter interpreted by private Judgments*? All this packing of the Cards is not for nothing. However let us deal fairly and above-board.

If then by *Scripture's Letter* he mean (as some of his Friends do) *unsensd Characters*, I confess *Scripture's Letter* cannot be the *Rule*, or *Way* to know. But such insignificant things we are unacquainted with in the *Holy Scripture*, which we own; if there be any such in his, it will lose nothing by throwing them out. Yet if he can think it reasonable to allow as much to the *Scripture*, which is a *Letter* from the *infallible God*, to *Men*, as he expects we should allow to this *Letter* of his, that it contains good *Sense* expressed in words *significant* and *intelligible*, we deny his *Assumption*, that *Scripture's Letter* is not *this way*.

Again, if by these words, *interpretable by private Judgments*, he mean the *Scripture* any way interpretable, as any private man may possibly *wrest* the words to make them comply with his own *Sentiments*, or through *ignorance* and *laziness*, and *neglect* of such *helps* and *means* as are fit to be used, may *misunderstand* them, he must have as wide a *Conscience*, and as little *Modesty*, as the impudent and wicked *Author* of *Pax Vobis*, who has the face to fasten such a meaning to the 6th of our 39. *Articles*, which hath no respect at all to the *Interpretation* of *Scripture*, but
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only to the *Sufficiency* and *Canm* thereof. But if his meaning be, that *Scripture*, as it may be *understood* by a *private* Man of a *competent* *Judgment*, using such *helps* as are proper, is not the way; we again deny his *Assumption*. For we suppose these things, That the *Scripture* is *Gods Word*, That it was written to be *understood*, That it was written for the Instruction of *private men*, That *they* are concerned to *understand* it, That they may *believe* and *live* as it directs; That they have means left them of *God* for the *understanding* of it, so far as it is of *necessary concernment* to them; And that using these means as they ought, they may *understand* it, and thus it is to them the way to know surely what *Christ* and his *Apostles* taught as *necessary* to their Salvation. And now let him shew, when he can, that these *Suppositions* are *unreasonable* or *false*.

But he offers at a *Proof* of what he saith; For (saith he) we experience *Presbyterians* and *Socinians* (for Example) both take that way, and yet differ in such high *Fundamentals* as the *Trinity* and the *Godhead* of *Christ*. I might here talk with him in his own *ridiculing* Language, Page 11. We bring our *Argument*, and he his *Instance* against it. What are People the wiser now? And which shall they be for, the *Argument*, or the *Instance*? For if an *Instance*, such as this in *Presbyterians* and *Socinians*, is enough to stand in Bar against any *Argument* proving the *Holy Scripture* to be the *Way* to know what *Christ* and his *Apostles* taught; what Reason can he give us, why the like *Instance* should not be as good against an *Argument* for *Tradition's* being the *Way*? *Tradition* it seems is so precious a thing with

with these men, that *Experience* is nothing in comparison of any *Argument* that they have advanced to defend it; but the *Scripture* is a thing of so *little worth*, seeing it favours them so little, that *Experience*, or any thing else, is thought enough to shew the Folly of trusting to it. But to let this pass; the force of his *Argument* is this, *If any Men can be found who wrest or misinterpret Scripture, then can it not be the Way to know what Christ and his Apostles taught.* Now to find men wrestling the *Scripture*, he needed not have sought amongst *Presbyterians* and *Socinians*, he might have met with *Instances* enow amongst *Popes* and *Councils*. But for the validity of the *Consequence*, he must yet seek a little farther, or get a *Decree* of some new *Council* to make it good; tho this will not do his *Work* neither; for 'tis granted us, that the same *Infallible Authority*, which by a bare *Declaration* can make an *Article of Faith*, may be mistaken in the *Arguments* it useth to prove it so. And indeed this *Argument* proves nothing, but that he has no good *Opinion* of the *Scripture*. For must a *Rule* be no good *Rule*, because some who use it, misunderstand it, and abuse it? Must a *Way* be a *wrong Way*, because some that take it, will not keep it? In short, till it be proved that God hath left such a *Way* or *Rule*, as no man can possibly err out of it, mistake it, or abuse it, and that it is not enough that he hath left us such a *Way* or *Rule*, as men may understand and observe if they be not wanting to themselves, it will not follow that the *Scripture's Letter* in the Sense we have own'd it, is not the *Way*, tho not only

only *Presbyterians* and *Socinians*, but the greater number of Mankind should own it, and yet differ about *fundamental* Points contained in it; no more than it follows, that because we see men misinterpret and break good *Laws* daily, therefore those *Laws* are *unintelligible*, or cannot be *kept*, and must be thought *insufficient* to shew them what the *Lawgiver* expects from them.

Yet, if this *Instance* in *Presbyterians* and *Socinians* be not a sufficient *Proof* that *Scripture* is not the way left us by God to know the Doctrine of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, you must expect no other in this *unanswerable discourse*; for all that follows, is but two [*Therefores*,] and one *Conclusion* twice repeated, as you here see.

IV. *Therefore Scripture's Letter interpretable by private Judgments is not the way left by God to know surely, what Christ and his Apostles taught, or surely to arrive at right Faith.* And again,

V. *Therefore they who take only that way, cannot by it arrive surely at right Faith, since 'tis impossible to arrive at the end, without the means or way that leads to it.* And so you have an unanswerable Discourse. Is this the Thing the Mountain has at last brought forth to send us home a Laughing? Is this the Man that undertakes to read *Logick* to the D. of P.? What trifling is this in him, who pretends to so much care of *Souls*? Thus he should have argued to have made sure work:

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God hath left us some Rule, which no man can possibly misunderstand or abuse. But Scripture Letter is not such a Rule, as no man can possibly misunderstand or abuse. Therefore, The Scriptures Letter is not the Rule which God hath left us.

Had we now denied the *Minor* in this *Syllogism*, then his instance of *Presbyterians* and *Socinians*, would have done him good Service. But if we had chanced to have denied the *Major*, as in all likelyhood we should have done, he had been at an utter loss, as we shall clearly see now we come to consider how he handles his own Rule, viz. Tradition.

The next Question is, *How it may appear that the Church of Rome is Infallible* ? To prove she is, he will grant us to be his part, if he think it need any proof, as I question whether he doth or no. For page 12, he tells us, *It is vain to talk against one Infallibility, unless we will set up another.* An *Infallibility*, he supposeth there must be among men, and then the old Argument must take place, that seeing no other pretends to it, but the *Roman Catholicks*, it must be among them; we must therefore either prove it to be with us, or in vain shall we deny it to be with them, whether they prove it or no, for some where it must be. But now suppose we deny that there is such a thing to be found among men ? Then will he have us grant, *That there are no means by which men may be secured from being deceived* ; and then, *they will not take all that pains that are necessary to compass that good, which for ought they can tell, they may not compass with all their pains.* *Ibid.* But here he is too hasty, for thō we know not where to find *infallible men*, now living on Earth, yet we know there is an *Infallible and Living God*, and He by Men indued with his *Infallible*
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Spirit, hath given us his *Word* plainly *Written*, and this *Word* is a *sufficient means* to secure us from being *dangerously deceived*, in any thing necessary to our *Salvation*, if we diligently attend unto it, and use the proper helps of understanding it. And this is our encouragement to take all pains to compass the *good* we desire, that the same *Infallible God* who hath given the *means*, hath assured his *blessing* to them that diligently use them. Yet I a little wonder, to hear him talk of men's being discouraged from *taking pains* to be well assured of the *truth*, for want of an *Infallible Guide*, when it hath been the common Argument a long time, whereby such a *Guide* has been commended to us, that it would *save* us the *pains* of examining the particulars of our *faith*. If we be in love with *ease*, or if we be content to take *pains*, all's one, there's enough in the *Infallibility* of the *Church of Rome* for all; the *pleasure* of the *one*, or the necessity of the *other*, may be a *Motive* sufficient to enter into that *Communion*, wherein we may, it seems, have our free choice of *either*. What cunning Gamesters are these men, that hope to win with any hand? Certainly they trust more to their *Art*, than to their *Cards*.

After we have been sent from place to place to seek this *Infallibility*, where now shall we find it at last? In *Tradition* if any where, for we have miss'd it everywhere else. And there we have already found it, if our *Authour* must be trusted. *The certainty of Scripture is from Tradition, therefore there is no refusing that Tradition causes certainty, and makes faith as certain as Scripture, page 7.* Yet it may be this *Certainty* comes not up to *Infallibility*: yes it is the very same as you heard before, and he adds, *page 23. This makes Tradition to be an Infallible ascertainer of some things at least;*
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and so unless some special difficulty be found in other things, that light into the same channel, it must needs bring them down Infallibly too. Now it is very true, that we have the *Books of Scriptures* by *Tradition*, and what other way such *antient Books* could be convey'd unto us, I confess I do not know; neither indeed can I see what greater *Certainty* any man can reasonably desire, that these indeed are the very *same Books* which the *Authours* of them left to the *Church*, and which the *Church* hath always received as the *Word of God*. And this *Tradition*, we look upon as a ground of *sufficient certainty* of this matter of *Fact*, wherein no man was ever wont to desire better, nor in reason can. But then first, This *Tradition* is not that of the *Church of Rome only*, which is the *only Tradition* that I ever heard of, that has been pretended to be the ground of *Infallibility*, but a more *Universal Tradition* of all *Christians*; if some of whom had not been more careful to preserve these *Books*, than they of *Rome*, we might, for ought I know, have lost some of them, at least, that Excellent *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*. And in the next place, this *Universal Tradition*, is no more but *Humane Testimony*, and that can be no ground of *Infallibility*, which excludes all possibility of *Error*. A *Moral Certainty* is enough to stand on such a *foundation*, and all that can be rationally desired in this case. These *Books*, as writ by the *Inspiration* of the *Holy Ghost*, are the foundation of our *Christian Faith*; and he knows, I hope, that neither *Papists* nor *Protestants* content themselves with *Tradition*, but produce abundance of other *Arguments*, for the Confirmation of *Scripture's Divine Authority*. And whereas he saith, it makes *Faith as Certain as Scripture*, no man can doubt but conveying the *Book* to us, it conveys to us all points of *Faith* contained in

the *Book*; and witnessing the *Book* to be writ by men *divinely inspired*, it also gives as good *credit* to the *Faith* contained in it, as *humane Testimony* can give. But he means another thing, when he thus explains himself, *Unless some special difficulty be found in other things that light into the same channel, it must needs bring them down infallibly too.* These *other things* are things *unwritten* in that Holy *Book*; and without more ado, we will promise him, that when ever he can shew us those *other things*, and assure us that they *light* into the *same channel* of *Universal*, not only *Roman Tradition*, and are so convey'd to us, we will entertain them with the same *Certainty* as we entertain the *Scripture*, upon account of that *Tradition only*. But for these *other things*, which are to be parts of *Faith* too, I fear we must either fish for them in the *Channel* of *Tiber*, or not at all find them.

All Traditional Christians believe the same to day, which they did yesterday, and so up to the time of our Blessed Saviour; page 8. So saith Mr. G. And saith our Author, *There is no denying this, but by denying that Traditional Christians, are Traditional Christians.* But suppose these *Traditional Christians*, be so call'd from their adhering to a *Tradition*, which reacheth not so high as our *Blessed Saviour's* time, but only *pretends* to it, as they are by others, if not by themselves; may we not call them *Traditional Christians*, and confess too that they believe the *same to day* as they did *yesterday*, yea, and as they did ever since the *Council* of *Trent*, or some *hundreds* of years before that, and yet deny that they believe the *same*, that was believed quite up to the time of our *Blessed Saviour*? Yes, this is and will be *denied*, till he can *prove* it.

Next Mr. G. saith, *If they follow this Rule, they can never*

never err in Faith. And his Friend tell us, *This is palpably self-evident*, and p. 9. *therefore they are infallible.* But unless the *Rule of Tradition*, which they follow, be *longer* than it is yet *proved* to be, they may follow it, and *err* all along by following it. And let it be never so *long*, yet if they follow it not they may *err*, and therefore are not *infallible*; except he shew, that they cannot *choose* but follow it. So that unless it be first, as was before said, proved that God hath given a *Rule* which no man can *possibly* swerve from, (which supposed, not only a *Pope* or *Council*, but *all* who have it are *infallible*) we must all be content to be *fallible* still. Yea, but, *They could not innovate in Faith, unless they did forget what they held the day before, or out of malice alter it.* Our Authour undertakes to make this out more clearly, and therefore we will hear what he saith for our better information, page 18. He asks, *Did Christ teach any error?* and he may be confident we will say He did not. Then it follows, *When a Father believ'd what Christ taught him, and the Son what the Father believ'd, did not the Son too believe what Christ taught?* No doubt of it but he did. *Run it on* (then saith he) *to the last Son that shall be born in the World, must not every one believe what Christ taught, if every one believe what his Father believed?* It is certain he must. *And will you then* (saith he) *go about to perswade us, that there actually is a company of men in the World, who adhered to this Rule, all Sons believing always as their Fathers did, whereof the first believed as Christ taught, and who notwithstanding erred in matters of Faith?* No, he may be sure on't, we will never be so *unreasonable*; except he can first perswade us to enter into the *Ro-*
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man Communion, where we must lay by our *Reason*, and renounce our *Private Judgments*, and then I know not what *absurd* things we may be brought to do. Were it not very easie here for a man of less *rediculing Wit* than he triumphs in, to make as fine Sport with his *Non obstante* here, as he doth with another, page 33, and could do, I doubt not, with *two more*, which he knows of in the *Councils of Constance and Trent*? But I leave him to sport alone. We will grant him it is *impossible* to prove, *That men have erred, notwithstanding they never erred*; and let him, if he please, note it in his *Almanack*, amongst his *Self-evidents*.

But *notwithstanding*, (I would not have him want this word to play with) I say notwithstanding all he hath here said, one little thing is yet to be *proved*, viz. That these *Traditionary Christians*, adhere undecliningly to an unquestionable *Tradition*, descending *really* and *unvariably* from *Christ* and his *Apostles*, and could not *possibly* do otherwise; that is, That they never either *did* or *could err* from the *Faith* first taught; for this is but *supposed* hitherto, and from this *self-evident supposition*, (for it is as evident (saith he) as that *Traditionary Christians are Traditionary Christians*) he necessarily concludes thus, *Suppose Traditionary Christians neither did nor could err, it is certain they neither did nor could err*. Make what you can more of it.

There be *two* things, which, if they be incident to men, may, as is already confessed, cause an *innovation* or *alteration* in *Faith*, *Forgetfulness* and *Malice*. But our *Authour* hopes we can have no advantage by pleading either of these, in barre to the *Infallibility* of *Tradition*. You do not, I suppose

pose, desire, (saith he) that we should prove, that men had always Memories, or that Christians were never malicious enough to damn themselves, and their posterity wittingly, and yet it can stick no where else, page 32. Yet were there no danger of men's forgetting what had been taught, it is hard to say, why the Penmen of the Scripture, should have been at the needless pains to write it; Nay, St. Peter himself, if men's Memories be always so faithful, seem'd to be too forgetful of this, with so much diligence as he expresseth to Endeavour that they might be able after his decease, to have these things always in remembrance, 2 Pet. i. 15. And that by giving them unto them in Writing. And if such Malice as he talks of, can never possibly be found amongst Christians, or men professing themselves so; to damn themselves and Posterity wittingly, I would fain have him tell us, how it comes to pass, that we find at this day among such Christians, so many thousands by wickedness of all sorts halting to damnation themselves, and taking as little care to provide any better for their Children? May not Christians through Malice and Wickedness, be as careless of preserving the Faith, as of maintaining Holiness in themselves or their Posterity, when they know that Sin is as damnable as Error.

Again, supposing neither Forgetfulness nor Malice, enough to spoil the Rule of Tradition, What if all Sons did not understand aright, all that Fathers had taught them? Is not this as possible, as for some not to understand aright, what Christ and his Apostles taught them? And such there were amongst their hearers. What if some Sons were so negligent, as to take no care either to remember or teach what

what they had been taught by their *Fathers*? Have we not daily experience of such careless persons, who yet want neither understanding, nor Memory? What, if some through *Ambition*, *Vain-glory*, and *Popularity*, set abroad new *Doctrines*, and taught them for *Apostolical Traditions*? What, if others to save themselves from *Persecution*, concealed part, and corrupted more of the *Doctrine of Christ* by their own *Traditions*, taken not from *Christ*, but from their *forefathers*, *Jews*, or *Gentiles*? And to say no more, What, if some through a *blind zeal*, *ignorant devotion*, *superstitious rigour*, and *vain credulity*, added many things to the *doctrine of Christ*, which by degrees grew into more general esteem, till at last they were *own'd* and *imposed* as necessary to be believed and practiced? What, if *Error* any of these ways brought forth, grew, multiplied, spread, obtain'd most power, and drove out all that held the *naked truth*, out of all those Countries where it came? Because *Instances* brought by us, are unwelcome to this *Gentleman*, I will leave him, to furnish himself with them out of all *Histories*.

But now, he will, I suppose betake himself again to his only *Refuge*, That when any of these fell into *Error*, they left their *Rule*, *Tradition*. I long (saith he) to hear it made out, That an erring Church can still plead *Tradition*, and adhere to it, p. 18. For, that a Church may follow *Tradition* at one time, and leave it at another, is no news, p. 15. If this be no news, then, though we should grant *Tradition* to be an *Infallible conveyance* of the *Truth*, yet, would it not make, even that Church, which now adheres to it, to be *Infallible*; and therefore the Church of *Rome* (though we should confess her at present, to adhere to *Infallible Tra-*

Tradition) could not prove her self thereby to be *Infallible*. That Church onely is *Infallible*, which cannot err. The Church that at one time follows *Tradition*, may leave it at another, and so doing errs. Therefore if the Church of *Rome* be *Infallible*, she must prove, not only that she follows *Tradition*, for so she proves only that she doth not err; but also that she cannot leave it, for *Infallibility* excludes all possibility of erring, by leaving *Tradition*. She must therefore seek out a new *Medium* to prove her self *Infallible*. For hitherto, according to his own way of reasoning, she has but the same priviledge that all Churches have, not to err so long as she holds to *Tradition*, and doth not leave it.

Yet, if it may be proved onely that the Church of *Rome* doth not err, I think we are obliged to *Communicate* with her. And therefore it were enough for her to prove her self free from *Error*, which is a much easier task, if she be so, then to prove her self *Infallible*. To prove the former is enough, and in vain she attempts to prove the later, till the former be proved. Why then labours she to no purpose? For as light as this *Author* makes of *Instances*, yet all the World knows, that a single *Instance*, in one *Error*, is enough to answer all the *Arguments* can be brought for her *Infallibility*; seeing it must needs be false to say she cannot err, who in any one thing doth err. And truly, I think her very claim to *Infallibility*, is enough to prove that she doth err, and therefore is not *Infallible*.

That an erring Church may plead *Tradition*, himself does not greatly deny, which is one thing that he
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longs to hear made out. And he needs not go to the *Greek Church*, his *own* will abundantly shew it him. But, *That an erring Church adheres to Tradition*, if he means true *Apostolical Tradition*, and *adhering to it wholly and onely*, I know no man that will undertake to make it out, to save his longing. Let him shew us the Church that holds to this *Tradition*, and we will not onely grant she *errs* not, but will also be of her *Communion*, though we will not grant her to be *Infallible*, and so an happy end will be put to all our Disputes at once.

I confess, it seems very odd to me, that men should call us *Hereticks*, and condemn us for *erring in Faith*, and at the same time prove the Articles of their own *Faith*, by the *Infallibility* of their *Church*, and ground that *Infallibility* on *Tradition*, and prove that *Tradition* to be an *Infallible conveyance*, by an *Argument*, which if it proves any thing to the purpose, must prove, that no man that hath been taught the *Faith*, can ever *err* from it; and yet, still withal, confess that a Church following *Tradition* now, may *leave* it afterwards. If a man may *leave* the *Rule*, and by leaving it, *err in Faith*, then his *holding to it formerly*, did not secure him from all *error in Faith*. And if a man cannot *err* from what he hath been taught, then can no man that hath been taught the *Faith*, be an *Heretick*. In short, *Christ* and his *Apostles* taught one and the same *Doctrine*, *Innovations*, 'tis certain, and *Alterations* have been made in this *Doctrine*, it's no matter whether it was through *Forgetfulness*, or *Malice*, or some *other* motive, such things undeniably there are amongst *Christians*, and therefore some have been taught

taught *otherwise* than at *first* men were taught ; so that without all dispute, the *Rule of Tradition* is somewhere broken. The Church of *Rome* saith, *all* have broke it but *she* only, but how *proves* *she* this ? *She* says, *she holds the same to day, which she did yesterday, and so up to our Blessed Saviour's time.* We call again for a *proof* of this, *She* tells us, *if she follow'd this Rule, she could never err in Faith.* But did *she* follow this Rule ? *She* says, *she did*, and if you will not believe her, there's an end.

And here I might end your trouble, but that I have spied a few gleanings yet behind, which may possibly be worth gathering up. He tells, *page 25.* *We give only a General Latitudinarian Rule, common to all the Heresies in the World :* You know Sir, that the *Holy Scripture* is our *Rule*, and this is indeed the *General Rule* given by God to us *all*, and in this sense *Latitudinarian* too, that it contains *all things* necessary to Salvation, and *common to Hereticks*, it is and ought to be, tho' they miserably abuse it, and tho' I could tell him too of *Hereticks*, that trusted more to *his Rule* than to *ours*. He therefore must pardon us, if we cannot give him a better *Rule* than God hath given us, neither can think fit to throw it away, because some men will abuse it. Yea but, *it makes light and darkness very consistent, and Christ and Belial very good friends. Ibid.* I hope you read not this without a more than ordinary concernment for the man, who ever he is, that hath so little reverence for *God* and his holy *Word*, for he cannot but know that the *Holy Scripture* only is our *Rule*, against which he ventures to utter so much *Blasphemy*. All the return I shall make for this,

is my hearty prayer, That God may give him *Repentance unto life.*

In his 26 page, we are told, That *the Difference constituting our Protestant Rule, as distinguished from that of those most abominable Hereticks, can only be* [As my own Judgment or others of my side, thus or thus interpret Scripture's Letter] *and wriggle* (saith he) *which way you please, there it will and must end at last.* Who can expect less, but that where men pretend to *Infallibility*, they should also pretend to know what is our *Rule*, better then we our selves, poor *fallible* Creatures do ? To what purpose should we tell them again and again, what is our *Rule*, when they are resolved beforehand, not to believe that we know what it is. If this conceited Sir would give us leave to know our own minds, I would tell him once more, That *Plain Scripture* is our *Rule*, and that the *Interpretation* of it by any *Sect* of people, *Romanists* or *others*, is extrinsecal to it, and no *constitutive difference* of it. In general, 'tis the *Word of God* ; in *contradistinction* to the *Roman Rule of Scripture and Traditions*, 'tis the *Written Word*, or *Scripture* only ; and as *diffèrenced* from both *Romanists* and other *Hereticks* and *Sectaries*, it is *Scripture plainly delivering a sense own'd and declared by the Primitive Church of Christ in the Three Creeds, Four first General Councils, and Harmony of the Fathers.* This I hope is *plain dealing* and no *Wriggling*, and here we take up our stand, let him endeavour to draw us whither he can.

After he has been quarrelling with our *Rule*, and with us for not giving a more *distinct Rule*, he next complains of us for not following our *Rule.* Not one
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of a Million, even of your own Protestants (saith he) relies on, or ever thinks of relying on your Rule of Faith, in order to make choice of their Faith, or determining what to hold. *Ibid.* Tho' I fear many of them are too negligent, yet I hope he is out in his account, or else I know he is uncharitable in thus judging, without taking an account of them. I am apt to think they are more attentive to their Rule than he imagines, or else they would be a little more indifferent which Religion prevails, than most of them yet seem to be. Yet be it as he would have it, 'tis the fault of the people onely, neither of our Religion nor our Rule: And he knows well enough how easie it is for us too to spie such faults abroad.

After much talk to the same, I mean, to no purpose, he asks page 27. *How few use all the Fallible means (for you allow them no other) which they are to make use of to find out their Faith?* Again I answer, too few; but yet many more than he could wish did make use of them. And how Fallible soever these means be, they are as Infallible as any afforded the people in his Church, and as much more certain, as the Word of God is more certain than that of a Priest.

But now comes the great Secret of all, which was never discover'd till now. *Not the Letter of Scripture, but honest Tradition is our Rule, page 28.* Nay, and this is evident too (though we could none of us see it all this while, what bad eyes have Protestants?) *That the Tradition of our Fathers and Teachers, and not Scripture's Letter is indeed our Rule, page 29.* Where are we now? In the

the Church of *Rome* e're we were aware of it ? We are all good *Roman Catholicks* on a sudden, we are become an *Infallible Church* and did not know it. What Vertue is there in these fine *Letters*, and how insensibly do they work upon us ? Fear not Sir, he has *proved* it I'll warrant you, and that *unanswerably*, as he does all things. Children *simply believe their Fathers and Teachers*, page 27. Therefore their *Rule* is *Tradition*. This is true, only we must remember, 'tis a *Tradition* of *Scripture* only. Next, *all bearers do not inquire whether others give not more congruous explications of Scripture, then their own preachers do*. Therefore they follow *Tradition*. They do indeed follow what the *preacher* has deliver'd to them from the *Scripture*, and what he has made them see plainly there, they think it needless to run as far as *Rome*, to see more clearly by *unwritten Tradition*. Lastly, *The Reformers meant not that the believing Church should have the Liberty to Interpret Scripture against the teaching Church, or Pastors, or coin a Faith out of it, contrary to the present or former Congregation of which he was a Member*, page 29. Therefore again they follow *Tradition*. They do indeed *Apostolical* and *Scriptural Tradition*. And herein both *Pastors* and *People* are well agreed, that they are neither for *Coining faith*, and therefore will neither of them give leave to the other *so to do*. They have a *good old Faith* delivered to them both by *Scripture*, and the *Primitive Church*, and to this they are resolved to stand.

Thus Sir, having given you my thoughts of this ingenious *Letter* ; I leave you to think what you

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you can of it better , desiring you only to think
no worse of your own *Religion* for it, till you
hear more from

*Your very faithful Friend
and Servant.*

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